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Capitol Punishment . . . By Art Buchwald

The True Secret Service

THE CIA has been getting so much publicity lately that one starts to wonder how secret our secret service really is. Esquire magazine devoted an entire issue to the CIA, the New York Times had a five-part series on it, and the CIA is defending an Estonian in a slander suit in Baltimore. In another case coming to court soon, a man who says he worked for the CIA is being tried for smuggling arms destined for Angola and Mozambique. You can't pick up the newspaper or magazine these days without reading about the organization.



Art Buchwald

Many people are bewildered over the amount of publicity the CIA is getting, but I can put their minds at ease. The reason the CIA is getting all the publicity is that it is not our major secret service organization. It is, in fact, a cover to detract from our real central intelligence agency, which is the Department of Agriculture.

Yes, the Department of Agriculture is the real intelligence organization, operating without fanfare, rarely getting its name in the papers and maintaining a discreet silence worthy of the greatest intelligence operation in the free world.

IF CAN NOW be revealed that the CIA was set up for no other reason than to

keep people from prying into the affairs of the Agriculture Department.

The \$46 million CIA headquarters at Langley, with its 16,000 employees, the far-flung spy network, the gathering of information from around the world, is all a ruse that, up until now, has worked beyond the Department of Agriculture's wildest dreams.

The CIA has been blamed for the U-2 incident, the foul-up in the Dominican Republic, and the setting up of the Diem government in South Vietnam. What few people realize is that that is exactly the way Orville L. Freeman, the Secretary of Agriculture, wants it, because the more things the CIA gets blamed for, the less chance there is of discovering who was really behind these operations.

Whenever someone starts getting inquisitive about what the Department of Agriculture is up to, the CIA immediately leaks a story to the press of some momentous blunder the CIA committed, and everyone, including the Russians, think we goofed again.

THE REASON the Department of Agriculture was chosen to be our intelligence arm is that no one really cares what the Agriculture people do. They have an inexhaustible supply of funds that they are supposed to pay out to the farmers for not growing crops.

Using this as a pretext, the Department can siphon off large amounts of money

to its agents in the form of farm subsidies, and no one is the wiser.

Besides this, the Department has crop-dusting aircraft, which are really used for spying operations, and all the storage facilities, which are supposed to be holding surplus commodities, are, in fact, filled with the latest and most sophisticated spy equipment.

The only time the Department of Agriculture was even remotely in the limelight was during the Billie Sol Estes swindle. But just when the heat was on, the CIA pulled off the Bay of Pigs caper, and everyone forgot about Estes.

THE CIA angrily denied the charges that they were a front for the Department of Agriculture when I called them. But the evidence is so overwhelming that their protestations just added, rather than detracted, from my theory.

No organization that gets in the papers as much as the CIA could possibly be part of our secret service, and no organization that gets in the papers as little as the Department of Agriculture could be anything but a world-wide intelligence network.

Let this be a lesson to those who believe the United States government does not know what it's doing.

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